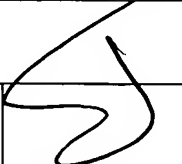


<p align="center"><b>Notice of Allowability</b></p>	<b>Application No.</b>	<b>Applicant(s)</b>	
	10/712,798	SCHMIDT ET AL.	
	<b>Examiner</b>  Lars A Olson	<b>Art Unit</b>  3617	

**-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--**

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to the amendment received from the applicant on September 21, 2004.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 2,3,7-13,15,23,24 and 28-43.
3. ☒ The drawings filed on 12 November 2003 are accepted by the Examiner.
4. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
  - a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some\*    c) ☐ None    of the:
    1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
    2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
    3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* Certified copies not received: \_\_\_\_\_.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.  
**THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.**

5. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
  6. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS ( as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
    - (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review ( PTO-948) attached
      - 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
    - (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).**
7. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

**Attachment(s)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)</li> <li>2. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)</li> <li>3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08),<br/> Paper No./Mail Date <u>09212004</u></li> <li>4. <input type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit<br/> of Biological Material</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)</li> <li>6. <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413),<br/> Paper No./Mail Date _____.</li> <li>7. <input type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Amendment/Comment</li> <li>8. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance</li> <li>9. <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____.</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

### Reasons for Allowance

1. An amendment was received from the applicant on September 21, 2004.
2. Claims 1, 4-6, 14, 16-22 and 25-27 have been canceled.
3. Claims 2, 3, 7-13, 15, 23, 24 and 28-43 are allowed.
4. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance. The variable-draft vessel as claimed is not shown or suggested in the prior art because of the use of a vessel that is comprised of a center hull, a first side hull that is coupled to a first side of said center hull, a second side hull that is coupled to a second side of said center hull, at least one cross support that couples said first and second side hulls, and a ramp that is coupled to a first end of said center hull, where said center hull is configured to be vertically translated with respect to said first and second side hulls.
5. The prior art as disclosed by Malin (US 3,437,067) shows the use of a vessel that is comprised of a center hull, first and second side hulls that are coupled to said center hull, and at least one cross support that couples said first and second side hulls together, where said center hull is configured to be vertically translated with respect to said first and second side hulls by means of lifting mechanisms in the form of hydraulic jacks that are coupled between said center hull and said first and second side hulls. And newly cited references by Loui (US 5,433,161), Zapka (US 5,313,906), Yoshida (US 4,763,596) and Lang (US 4,440,103) disclose various semi-submersible vessels having a center hull and at least a pair of side hulls. However, none of the prior art cited shows or suggests the use of a variable-draft vessel that is comprised of a center hull, a

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first side hull that is coupled to a first side of said center hull, a second side hull that is coupled to a second side of said center hull, at least one cross support that couples said first and second side hulls, and a ramp that is coupled to a first end of said center hull, where said center hull is configured to be vertically translated with respect to said first and second side hulls.

**Conclusion**

6. Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication from the examiner should be directed to Exr. Lars Olson whose telephone number is (703) 308-9807.

lo

November 2, 2004

**LARS A. OLSON  
PATENT EXAMINER**

*Lars Olson*  
11/2/04